

## APPLICATION NARRATIVE

### Need and Rationale

Mississippi's cultural heritage collections are dispersed among archives, libraries, and museums in public, private, and academic settings. Levels of staff training and expertise about general care of collections, cataloging and access tools, preservation, disaster recovery, and digitization are widely variable. At the same time, many institutions do not have sufficient resources to remedy the situation. When funding is available, projects tend to be conducted in isolation, with little connection made to projects at other institutions and even less planning for project sustainability. For the last several years, cultural heritage professionals in Mississippi have discussed the possibilities of resolving these problems through coordinated activity among the libraries, archives, museums, and other cultural heritage institutions in the state, with the ultimate goal of providing better care of and access to these varied and rich collections.

The confusion that ensued after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in August 2005 magnified the urgency of needs in our state. After this massive disaster, some institutions were unnecessarily assessed multiple times while others were lost in the shuffle. Inadequate disaster planning, insufficient staff training, absence of key partnerships, poor communication, and deficient inventories of unique materials contributed to inefficient response and loss of irreplaceable cultural resources, including historically significant local records needed to re-establish community government and business.

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH), the Mississippi Library Commission (MLC), and The University of Southern Mississippi Libraries (USM) have stepped forward to lead the building of the *Mississippi Cultural Resources Network*, a system of partnerships between libraries, archives, museums, other institutions with cultural resources, and county and state officials. This network will eventually include: 1) a shared and easily updatable inventory of original cultural heritage holdings in the state, 2) a statewide collaborative plan for emergency response and preparedness, 3) an infrastructure of shared knowledge developed through a statewide training module that incorporates national standards and best practices while addressing the specific needs and resources of Mississippi institutions, and 4) an expansion of the existing IMLS-funded Mississippi Digital Library.

This proposal requests funding to conduct a comprehensive survey of the status of Mississippi's collections, institutional preparedness for emergency, and the level of knowledge about collections care among institutional staffs. Funding is also requested to hold several planning meetings to guide future collaborative collection care efforts. These are essential steps in improving the care of our state's cultural heritage collections, as well as vital groundwork for the larger *Mississippi Cultural Resources Network* initiative. Thus, the current proposal will address all four recommendations of the *Heritage Health Index (HHI)* by providing an informed base from which we can develop improved collection conditions, viable emergency plans, better staff training, and stronger partnerships between institutions, governmental agencies, and the general public.

### The Planning Process

The proposed survey will involve more than 400 institutions in 82 counties throughout a largely rural state. The planning meetings will continue the process begun in April 2006 of linking these institutions together in a statewide network. At the same time, participating repositories will build a well-developed knowledge of Mississippi's collections and issues related to their care, allowing

each institution to maximize scarce resources and form their own strategies within the context of the broader *Mississippi Cultural Resources Network*.

A series of collection recovery workshops conducted by conservators from Winterthur Museum has already been held, as well as numerous disaster planning workshops (including dPlan). Preliminary survey and assessment of collections has also begun. During the grant period proposed here, the participants will complete an online survey of the state's cultural heritage collections, preparedness for emergency, and training needs. Survey results, on-site visits, and additional Cultural Resources Network meetings will be used to form coordinated disaster planning and recovery partnerships and to plan for future collaborative training, preservation, and digitization efforts. The project will help the state identify the cultural resources that are most significant and most in jeopardy so that Mississippi can better plan for their long-term preservation and ensure future access to them.

### Participants

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the Mississippi Library Commission, and the University of Southern Mississippi Libraries are partnering on the project. A preliminary inquiry of primary institutions indicates broad support throughout the state. Institutions agreeing to participate include the Mississippi Museum of Art, the Mississippi Museum of Natural History, the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art, the University of Mississippi, Delta State University, Tougaloo College, ten regional library systems, and several historical societies and museums. Representatives of Heritage Preservation, the Northeast Document Conservation Center, Southeastern Museums Conference, SOLINET, and the Georgia Archives will be asked to serve on the project advisory board. At least one representative from each Mississippi Emergency Management district will also be included.

### Activities

The last statewide survey of collection holdings was Boyd and Young's *Mississippi's Historical Heritage* (1990), which did not include art institutions. Project participants will compile collection data gathered since that time (including the flurry of surveys conducted in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina) and identify any deficiencies in the data. They will also conduct a new survey of more than 400 institutions designed to correct these deficiencies and collect further information related to emergency preparedness, digitization, and training.

Personnel will conduct limited site visits to some institutions as needed, based on information gathered during the initial survey. The purpose of the site visits will be to 1) collect additional data on relevant holdings, 2) assess the condition of the materials, 3) make recommendations for preservation, and 4) liaison with repositories on training needs, and collection care needs.

Personnel associated with MDAH, MLC, and USM Libraries will coordinate a series of meetings at the state and regional levels to establish partnerships for disaster planning and recovery, (incorporating key concepts from the Alliance for Response program of Heritage Preservation), as well as for future collaborative training, preservation, and digitization efforts. Resources for dealing with various disasters will be assessed at each level and government agency personnel will be included in the discussions.

### Management

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History will manage the financial aspects of the project, and a coordinating committee consisting of personnel from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the Mississippi Library Commission, and the University of Southern

Mississippi Libraries will provide oversight for the effort. A representative of the Mississippi Museum Association will also be invited to serve on the coordinating committee. Each partner repository will have a repository leader to coordinate work at each site. An advisory board consisting of representatives of state emergency management staff, cultural heritage institutions, and related out-of-state cultural heritage initiatives will serve as an on-going resource.

### **Project Resources: Budget and Personnel**

#### Budget

Each budget item requested of IMLS contributes directly to essential components of the project. Monies requested will provide for the employment of a consultant with expertise in survey development and analysis and database creation, travel costs for meetings across the state, associated services such as software licenses and data entry, and various supplies as outlined in the budget forms.

#### Personnel

Project partners have pledged a significant amount of project support in the form of in-kind personnel, indicating a meaningful commitment on the part of the applicant and its partners to use the limited funds to collaborate in the interest of achieving shared objectives. The participating repositories have demonstrated the technical knowledge required to successfully complete the project in numerous past initiatives. The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has participated in collection assessment and recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina. It is the emergency support agency for cultural resources and state records designated by the Mississippi Emergency Management agency. MDAH staff serve on the advisory committees of current disaster recovery/emergency preparedness projects of SOLINET, NEDCC, SAA, Heritage Preservation, and the Council of State Archivists. The Mississippi Library Commission has participated in collection assessment and recovery efforts after Hurricane Katrina. It serves in an advisory capacity to the state's public libraries. The USM Libraries has participated in a survey of civil rights collections at six Mississippi institutions. Since September 2005 MDAH and MLC staff have met monthly with staff of the Mississippi Arts Commission and Mississippi Humanities Council, coordinating response and recovery efforts on the Gulf Coast and laying the groundwork for this proposed collaborative initiative.

#### Positions (Funding Sources)

**Project Director (Mississippi Department of Archives and History):** Provides general oversight of the project, including financial administration, reporting to IMLS, supervision of grant-funded personnel, and communicating with other project participants. Participates in planning for future collections care and training efforts. Coordinates efforts with related national and regional projects. Participates in meetings and discussions related to disaster planning/recovery, creation of statewide standards, and creation of the infrastructure for a long-lasting Cultural Resources Network. Julia Marks Young is Director of the Archives and Records Services Division of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

**Partnership Leader (Mississippi Library Commission):** Works with participants in the survey component. Participates in planning for future collections care and training efforts. Participates in meetings and discussions related to disaster planning/recovery, creation of statewide standards, and creation of the infrastructure for a long-lasting Cultural Resources Network. Sharman Smith is Executive Director of the Mississippi Library Commission.

Partnership Leader (USM Libraries): Works with participants in the survey component. Participates in planning for future collections care and training efforts. Participates in meetings and discussions related to disaster planning/recovery, creation of statewide standards, and creation of the infrastructure for a long-lasting Cultural Resources Network. Diane DeCesare Ross is Curator of Manuscripts, Archives, and Digital Collections at USM and director of the *Mississippi Digital Library*, which is funded by IMLS through November 2007.

Cultural Resources Database Specialist (Mississippi Department of Archives and History): Oversees the design and development of a web-based statewide database providing the repository-level information needed to sustain the cultural resources network and coordinate emergency response for cultural collections. Plans and participates in meetings related to disaster planning/recovery, creation of statewide standards, creation of the infrastructure for a long-lasting Cultural Resources Network. Jenice Tate is Lead Systems Administrator in the Archives and Library Division at MDAH.

Emergency Preparedness Network Specialist (Mississippi Department of Archives and History): Works with project staff in the survey and emergency preparedness components. Coordinates project efforts with state emergency management staff. Plans and participates in planning for future collections care and training efforts, disaster planning/recovery, creation of statewide standards, and creation of the infrastructure for a long-lasting Cultural Resources Network. Forrest W. Galey is Special Projects Officer IV in the Archives and Library Division at MDAH.

Records Specialist (Mississippi Department of Archives and History): Works with project staff in the survey of records in the 82 counties. Liaises with federal and state emergency preparedness agencies and helps coordinate the development of disaster planning and recovery partnerships between local officials and cultural resources agencies. Participates in planning for future collections care and training efforts, disaster planning/recovery, creation of statewide standards, and creation of the infrastructure for a long-lasting Cultural Resources Network. Bob Dent is Director of Government Records at MDAH.

Public Library Consultant (Mississippi Library Commission): Works with project staff to implement the project in public libraries statewide, identify collections and resources appropriate to the project, coordinate public library project planning and proposal development, and plan continuing education/training opportunities. Margaret Murray is a Senior Library Consultant at MLC.

Public Library Consultant (Mississippi Library Commission): Works with project staff to implement the project in public libraries statewide, identify collections and resources appropriate to the project, coordinate public library project planning and proposal development, and plan continuing education/training opportunities. Kathy Buntin is a Senior Library Consultant at MLC.

Public Library Services Coordinator (Mississippi Library Commission): Coordinates the work of the Public Library Consultants and the Public Relations Consultant with that of the other project staff and partners. Glenda Tilson is Library Services Director at MLC.

Public Relations Specialist (Mississippi Library Commission): Works with project staff to plan and organize the dissemination of information about the project to representatives of public

organizations, the general public, and federal, state, and local agencies. Gloria Washington is Public Relations Director at MLC.

Public Library Field Consultant (Mississippi Library Commission): Reviews the project plans, procedures, and policies as they are applied in public libraries and makes recommendations for the improvement of the statewide network. Identifies collections and resources appropriate to the project and assists with continuing education/training opportunities. (Hiring in process.)

Academic Library/Museum Consultant (USM Libraries): Works with project staff to implement the project in academic libraries and museums statewide, identify collections and resources appropriate to the project, coordinate academic library project planning and proposal development, and plan continuing education/training opportunities. Sherry Laughlin is Associate University Librarian at USM.

Academic Library/Museum Consultant (USM Libraries): Works with project staff to implement the project in academic libraries and museums statewide, identify collections and resources appropriate to the project, coordinate academic library project planning and proposal development, and plan continuing education/training opportunities. Peggy Price is Head of Special Collections at USM.

Survey/Database Developer (IMLS): Designs, implements, and evaluates the project survey. Analyzes survey data. Writes clear reports of survey conclusions. Advises regarding data input and clean-up. Participates in team discussions to define and clarify survey and database requirements. The person filling this position will have a bachelor's degree in computer science or a related field, as well as basic web development skills and knowledge of database development methodologies, design, and implementation.

#### Project Evaluation

Participants will employ outcome-based evaluation to measure their success in achieving project goals. In doing so, they benefit from the OBE training program provided by IMLS in July 2001 in Washington, D.C. and in April 2004 in Jackson, Mississippi. Expected outcomes include:

1. A survey of the state's cultural heritage collections, preparedness for emergency, and training deficits will contribute to an enhanced knowledge of shared cultural resource issues and avenues for improvement among the state's cultural heritage professionals, as well as among state agencies dealing with public policy, funding, and emergency management.
2. Coordinated disaster planning and recovery partnerships will result in more efficient and effective response to disaster.
3. Cooperative partnerships and a statewide plan will guide staff training and collections care efforts.

#### Sustainability

Institutional support will continue after the funding period, with the Mississippi Department of Archives and History taking responsibility for maintaining the database of collection information. Just as the project partners began portions of the effort prior to funding, there is also a commitment among all three partners to continue development of better collections care through collaborative efforts after the grant period has elapsed. The results of the survey and planning will continue to be used by cultural heritage professionals, educators, and state agencies long past the initial grant period, as we strive to establish and expand the Mississippi Cultural Resources Network.